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Cultural Conceptualization In The Lexicon Of Traditional Kitchen Utensils Among The Malay Community Of Belaras Barat Village: A Cultural Linguistics Study

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the cultural conceptualizations embedded in the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils used by the Malay community of Belaras Barat Village, Mandah District, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative approach using a Qualitative Content Analysis design. The data consisted of lexical items referring to traditional kitchen utensils, collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field documentation. Informants were selected through purposive sampling and included customary leaders, native speakers, and community members knowledgeable about the use of traditional kitchen utensils. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by B. Miles et al. (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The interpretation was guided by the Cultural Linguistics framework developed by (Sharifian, 2017), particularly the concepts of cultural categories, cultural schemas, and cultural metaphors. The findings indicate that the lexical items *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi* function not merely as labels for material cultural objects but also as representations of the Malay community's collective cultural knowledge system. The analysis identified two principal cultural categories, namely storage containers and food-processing utensils. In addition, several cultural schemas emerged, including responsibility, hard work, mutual cooperation, leadership, and wisdom, which subsequently give rise to particular cultural metaphors. These findings demonstrate that the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils serves as a medium for transmitting cultural values and preserving the collective memory of the Malay community. This study contributes to the development of Cultural Linguistics by elucidating cultural conceptualizations represented through the lexicon of local material culture.

Keywords: Cultural Linguistics, cultural lexicon, Malay community, cultural schema, cultural metaphor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are inextricably linked in human life. Beyond serving as a means of communication, language functions as a repository through which cultural knowledge is stored, inherited, and transmitted across generations. Within the framework of Cultural Linguistics, language is understood as reflecting the cultural conceptualizations shared by members of a speech community (Sharifian, 2017). Through linguistic practices, communities construct, maintain, and transmit collective knowledge systems shaped by their social, historical, and ecological experiences.

Sharifian (2017) proposes that cultural conceptualizations are manifested through cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors, which influence how members of a community interpret and organize reality. This perspective is consistent with Palmer (1999) view that language represents cultural imagery developed through social experience. Kövecses (2010) argues that conceptual metaphors enable speakers to comprehend abstract concepts through concrete experiences grounded in everyday life. Accordingly, lexical items do not merely denote objects or actions; they also encode culturally shared values, norms, beliefs, and worldviews.

The relationship between language and cultural knowledge is particularly evident in the lexicon of traditional material culture. In Malay communities, traditional kitchen utensils constitute more than domestic implements used in food preparation and storage. They are also cultural artefacts associated with everyday practices, social relations, and inherited knowledge. In Belaras Barat Village, Mandah District, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province, lexical items such as *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi* refer to traditional kitchen utensils that remain embedded in the cultural memory of the local Malay community. These lexical items represent not only material objects but also culturally meaningful ways of understanding responsibility, cooperation, work, leadership, and wisdom.

Nevertheless, modernization, changing domestic practices, and the increasing use of manufactured kitchen equipment have contributed to the declining use of traditional utensils in everyday life. This transformation may also result in the gradual loss of associated lexical items and the cultural knowledge

embedded in them. The decline of traditional cultural lexicon is therefore not merely a linguistic issue but also concerns the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, collective memory, and local systems of knowledge.

Previous studies on cultural lexicon have commonly approached the topic through ethnolinguistics, lexical semantics, regional language documentation, and studies of material culture. These studies have made important contributions to identifying and describing local lexical items and their referential meanings. However, relatively limited attention has been given to the systematic examination of how cultural lexical items are connected to cultural categories, cultural schemas, and cultural metaphors within the framework of Cultural Linguistics. In particular, studies that investigate traditional Malay kitchen-utensil lexicon as a representation of collective cultural knowledge remain limited.

To address this gap, the present study examines the cultural conceptualizations embedded in the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils used by the Malay community of Belarar Barat Village. Drawing on Sharifian (2017) Cultural Linguistics framework, the study analyzes how selected lexical items represent cultural categories, activate culturally shared schemas, and give rise to culturally meaningful metaphors. The study focuses on the lexical items *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi* as linguistic representations of traditional Malay material culture.

This study makes three contributions to Cultural Linguistics. First, it documents a set of traditional Malay kitchen-utensil lexical items that are increasingly marginalized in contemporary everyday practice. Second, it demonstrates how cultural categories, cultural schemas, and cultural metaphors operate interdependently in the conceptualization of material culture. Third, it expands the empirical scope of Cultural Linguistics by foregrounding Malay cultural knowledge from Belarar Barat Village, Riau, Indonesia. Thus, this study contributes not only to the documentation of local cultural lexicon but also to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which language represents, preserves, and transmits cultural knowledge.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using a Qualitative Content Analysis design. This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth examination and interpretation of the cultural meanings embedded in the use of traditional lexical items (Schreier, 2012). Qualitative Content Analysis is particularly appropriate for identifying patterns of meaning, cultural representations, and conceptual structures within linguistic data.

The data consisted of lexical items referring to traditional kitchen utensils used by the Malay community of Belarar Barat Village, Mandah District, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field documentation. Participant observation was conducted to identify the forms, functions, and contexts of use of traditional kitchen utensils in everyday and cultural practices. In-depth interviews were undertaken to obtain informants' explanations of the lexical meanings, cultural associations, and social values attached to the selected lexical items. Field documentation included photographs of the utensils, interview recordings, field notes, and relevant local cultural records.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling. The participants included customary leaders, native speakers of the local Malay variety, and community members with knowledge of the use and cultural significance of traditional kitchen utensils. This sampling strategy was employed to ensure that the data were obtained from individuals with relevant linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, and practical experience related to the selected lexical items (Patton, 2015).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by B. Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, the collected data were transcribed, organized, and reduced by selecting lexical items and interview excerpts relevant to the research focus. Second, the data were displayed in analytical tables to facilitate comparison across lexical forms, lexical meanings, functions, and cultural interpretations. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative interpretation and verification of the emerging patterns.

The analytical interpretation was guided by the Cultural Linguistics framework developed by (Sharifian, 2017). Each lexical item was classified and interpreted according to four analytical dimensions: cultural category, cultural schema, cultural metaphor, and cultural values. Cultural categories were used to identify culturally meaningful classifications of traditional kitchen utensils; cultural schemas were used to examine shared cultural knowledge and social expectations associated with each lexical item; cultural metaphors were used to identify figurative conceptualizations derived from material and everyday experience; and cultural values were used to explain the broader moral and social principles represented through the lexicon. This framework enabled the study to examine traditional kitchen-utensil lexicon not only as a system of naming material objects but also as a linguistic representation of collective cultural knowledge within the Malay community.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Cultural Conceptualizations in the Lexicon of Traditional Malay Kitchen Utensils

The findings indicate that the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils used by the Malay community does not merely function as a set of labels for cultural objects. Rather, these lexical items represent cultural conceptualizations that have been transmitted across generations. The selected lexicon reflects the relationship between material culture, everyday practices, collective knowledge, and the social values upheld by the Malay community. As presented in Table 1, the analysis identified five lexical items: *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi*. These items were classified into two principal cultural categories: storage containers and food-processing utensils. Each lexical item activates particular cultural schemas and gives rise to culturally meaningful metaphors. The analysis further demonstrates that traditional kitchen-utensil lexicon encodes cultural values, including responsibility, diligence, mutual cooperation, leadership, wisdom, and self-restraint.

Table 1. Cultural Conceptualizations in the Lexicon of Traditional Malay Kitchen Utensils

No	Lexicon	Lexical Form	Image of Kitchen Utensil	Lexical Meaning	Cultural Category	Cultural Schema	Cultural Metaphor	Cultural Meaning	Cultural Values
1	Rage	Noun		A woven container made of rumbia palm leaves used to store food	Storage container	Preserving and caring for something valuable	Preserving food is a responsibility	Symbolizes the ability to safeguard, manage, and preserve something valuable	Responsibility, prudence, trustworthiness
2	Anak gileng	Noun phrase		A small stone used as the counterpart of a grinding tool to pulverize food ingredients	Food-processing utensil	Working to produce benefit	Work is sacrifice	Symbolizes sincerity, perseverance, and willingness to make sacrifices in work	Hard work, sacrifice, perseverance
3	Anak leng	Noun phrase		A small coconut shell used to mash spices and food ingredients	Food-processing utensil	Mutually complementary activities	Life is cooperation	Symbolizes unity and cooperation in domestic activities	Mutual cooperation, togetherness, solidarity
4	Anak lesong	Noun phrase		A pestle or pounding tool used with a mortar in food-processing activities	Food-processing utensil	Mobilizing the work process	A leader is a driving force	Symbolizes the role of a motivator, initiator, and guide in collective activities	Leadership, initiative, social responsibility
5	Balang serahi	Noun		A lidded glass container used to store food or kitchen ingredients	Storage container	Preserving and storing benefits	A wise person is a vessel of benefit	Symbolizes wisdom, self-restraint, and the ability to preserve goodness without drawing excessive attention to oneself	Wisdom, self-control, social moral values

3.2 *Rage* as a Representation of Responsibility

Rage is a woven container made from rumbia palm leaves and used to store food. Within the cultural category identified in this study, *rage* belongs to the category of storage containers. Its function as a container for preserving food activates a cultural schema associated with safeguarding and caring for something

valuable. In the Malay cultural conceptualization, preserving food is understood not merely as a practical domestic activity but also as an expression of responsibility toward what has been entrusted to an individual.

This cultural understanding gives rise to the cultural metaphor "preserving food is a responsibility". The metaphor suggests that food, as an essential resource for daily life, should be protected, managed, and used carefully. Thus, *rage* symbolizes the capacity to safeguard, manage, and preserve valuable resources. The cultural values represented through this lexical item include responsibility, prudence, and trustworthiness. The finding demonstrates that Malay cultural knowledge associates domestic food-storage practices with broader moral obligations in social life.

3.3 *Anak Gileng* as a Representation of Hard Work

Anak gileng refers to a small stone used in conjunction with a grinding tool to pulverize food ingredients. It belongs to the cultural category of food-processing utensils. The physical act of grinding requires effort, patience, and repeated movement. This concrete experience activates a cultural schema related to working diligently in order to produce beneficial outcomes.

The cultural schema underlying *anak gileng* gives rise to the cultural metaphor "work is sacrifice". This metaphor reflects the understanding that productive work requires commitment, perseverance, and a willingness to expend time and energy. The lexical item therefore represents the cultural values of hard work, sacrifice, and persistence. Within Malay cultural knowledge, the preparation of food is not merely a domestic activity; it also provides a concrete model for understanding the importance of sustained effort in achieving meaningful results.

3.4 *Anak Leng* as a Representation of Mutual Cooperation

Anak leng is a small coconut shell used to assist in mashing spices and food ingredients. From a cultural perspective, this utensil represents mutually complementary activities within the process of food preparation. Its use is associated with the idea that each tool, task, and individual contributes to the completion of a shared activity.

The cultural schema activated by *anak leng* concerns cooperation and togetherness in achieving common objectives. This conceptualization gives rise to the cultural metaphor "life is cooperation". The metaphor reflects the Malay understanding that social life is sustained through reciprocal assistance, collective participation, and solidarity. The cultural values represented by *anak leng* include *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), togetherness, and social solidarity. This finding illustrates how an ordinary domestic utensil may serve as a linguistic and cultural representation of communal social relations.

3.5 *Anak Lesong* as a Representation of Leadership

Anak lesong functions as a pestle used together with a mortar during food-processing activities. In practical terms, the pestle initiates and sustains the pounding process. This function activates a cultural schema in which an agent is understood as the force that mobilizes collective activity. Consequently, *anak lesong* is interpreted as a symbol of movement, initiative, and direction.

This cultural conceptualization gives rise to the cultural metaphor "a leader is a driving force". The metaphor indicates that leadership is understood through concrete experience involving an instrument that initiates and directs a process. In this sense, a leader is expected to motivate, guide, and coordinate others toward shared goals. The cultural values represented through *anak lesong* include leadership, initiative, and social responsibility. The finding suggests that Malay cultural conceptualizations of leadership are grounded in familiar material practices and everyday domestic experience.

3.6 *Balang Serahi* as a Representation of Wisdom

Balang serahi is a lidded glass container used to store food or kitchen ingredients. Its enclosed form and storage function activate a cultural schema related to preserving and retaining beneficial resources. In Malay cultural conceptualization, the ability to protect and retain what is beneficial is associated with a wise individual who exercises restraint and does not display personal virtues excessively.

This cultural schema gives rise to the cultural metaphor "a wise person is a vessel of benefit". The metaphor suggests that a wise person is someone who retains goodness, manages personal conduct carefully, and contributes benefit to others without seeking excessive recognition. The cultural values represented by *balang serahi* include wisdom, prudence, self-control, and social moral values. This finding indicates that the cultural meaning of a storage container extends beyond its physical function and becomes a model for understanding ethical conduct.

3.7 Traditional Kitchen-Utensil Lexicon as Collective Cultural Memory

The findings demonstrate that the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils functions as a repository of the Malay community's collective cultural memory. Each lexical item does not merely identify a material object; it also preserves culturally shared knowledge, social values, and ways of interpreting everyday life. The meanings associated with *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi* reveal that traditional utensils are embedded in a broader system of cultural conceptualization.

These findings support (Sharifian, 2017) view that language serves as a medium through which cultural conceptualizations are stored, negotiated, and transmitted within a speech community. In the context of the Malay community of Belarab Barat Village, traditional kitchen-utensil lexicon provides evidence that material culture and language are closely interconnected. The gradual decline in the use of these utensils may

therefore affect not only the survival of particular lexical items but also the continuity of the cultural knowledge and values associated with them.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the lexicon of traditional kitchen utensils used by the Malay community of Belarar Barat Village functions not only as a system for naming cultural objects but also as a representation of the community's cultural conceptual system. The Cultural Linguistics analysis identified two principal cultural categories, namely storage containers and food-processing utensils. Furthermore, the analysis revealed cultural schemas and cultural metaphors that reflect the values of responsibility, hard work, mutual cooperation, leadership, wisdom, prudence, and self-control.

The lexical items *rage*, *anak gileng*, *anak leng*, *anak lesong*, and *balang serahi* show that everyday material objects may function as conceptual resources through which a community understands moral obligations, social relationships, and appropriate individual conduct. The findings confirm that language serves as a repository of cultural knowledge and as a medium for transmitting collective values across generations.

Therefore, the preservation of traditional kitchen-utensil lexicon should be considered an important component of efforts to sustain Malay cultural identity amid cultural change, globalization, and technological development. Future research may expand the scope of analysis by examining additional domains of Malay material culture, comparing lexical conceptualizations across Malay communities, or investigating how younger generations understand and use traditional cultural lexicon.

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